

## **WORKSHOP NOTES**

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board  
**Balboa Park Committee (BPC)**  
**March 8, 2008**

### **ATTENDANCE:**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Jennifer Ayala  
Laurie Burgett  
Jeri Dilno  
Vicki Granowitz  
Mick Hager  
Andrew Kahng  
David Kinney  
Mike Mc Dowell  
Mike Singleton  
Donald Steele

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Patti Roscoe

#### **STAFF PRESENT**

Kathleen Hasenauer  
Susan Lowery-Mendoza  
Bruce Martinez

### **CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Chairperson Vicki Granowitz called the meeting to order at 8:40 am. She explained the BPC is the citizen's advisory group tasked with making land use recommendations for Balboa Park to the Mayor and City Council. The process will be open and transparent with all meetings including time for public comment.

She thanked everyone for attending the Special Workshop on the findings in the *Study of Balboa Park, The Soul of San Diego: Keeping Balboa Park Magnificent in its Second Century* and the San Diego, Legler-Benbough and Parker Foundations for commissioning the Study and bringing the experts who wrote the report to San Diego for this workshop. The Study looks at issues the BPC has been interested in for many years. The BPC has been given the narrowly focused task of reviewing and answering the three questions posited in the Balboa Park Study:

1. Can the city of San Diego provide the necessary financial support for Balboa Park in the future?
2. Even if it can, should it do so?
3. If it wishes to expand management and governance of the park, what are the alternatives for it to do so?

Initial meetings will focus on educating BPC members and the public by bringing in speakers on pertinent topics, followed by a discussion of the three questions in the Study and finally conclusions and recommendations by the early fall. This workshop is an opportunity for the BPC to hear the public's comments on the Study. The presentations will last 1 hour with approximately 2 hours set aside for public comment.

Mayor Sanders and Third District Councilmember Toni Atkins each made brief remarks on the importance of Balboa Park to the citizens of the region, thanking the public for turning out in such large numbers on such a beautiful day, encouraging the public to stay engaged and to participate in what should be a lively discussion, thanking the Foundations for commissioning the Study and the BPC's willingness to lead the public process.

The Chair introduced and thanked the four speakers: Peter Harnick, Director, Urban Parks Division, Trust for Public Land, Richard Little, Director, The Keston Institute, John Morey, President, The Morey Group and Glen Sparrow, Professor Emeritus SDSU, School of Public Affairs.

Meeting was tuned over to BPC member David Kinney to facilitate the rest of the meeting.

**Peter Harnick is with the Trust for Public Land** in Washington D.C. His specialty is to study City Park Systems.

Mr. Harnick began the meeting with an acknowledgement of the beauty of Balboa Park. Parks are the driving forces of their cities.

We need to ask ourselves, what does Balboa Park consist of?

Balboa Park is an extremely intricate Park. It is not surprising that it's so hard for the City to make decisions about the Park. Some people may think it's easy to take care of a park, but it's not; it doesn't take care of itself. In studying parks, Peter has realized they're more difficult than other industries. A park has horticulture needs, people needs, etc. This park is a major economic presence. Property around the park is more valuable, businesses that are close do well, it attracts tourism, etc.

How much would we be paying for all the free things that Balboa Park has to offer? It has many economic values.

The situation that Balboa Park is in is not unique. There aren't too many parks in the country that are comparable to this park and the ones that are have gone through a decline at some time or another. And same as in San Diego, concerned citizens have come together to resuscitate them. San Diego is a young, maturing City and it can use the example from those other parks that have gone through something similar as a learning tool.

One of the biggest problems is that Balboa Park is still so beautiful, the damage is not visible. But fortunately, we are working ahead of time. Chairperson Granowitz and the rest of the Balboa Park Committee are initiating future conversations to discuss some possible governance models.

Mr. Harnick described the current situation in Balboa Park, in reference to decision making for the Park, as a bundle of twigs. There are lots of people involved and everyone makes their own decisions. It is risky to have too many players. He'd like to see Balboa Park be something stronger than a bundle of twigs.

Peter then proceeded to introduce the first speaker:

**John Morey - owner of the Morey Group**

The Morey Group specializes in the Cultural Attraction Industry. What the Morey Group does is determine "What's really going on?"

With Balboa Park they took two different approaches:

1. Surveyed Park Patrons in center of Balboa Park

- Surveying was done one week in August and one week in September
- They did a total of 2,000 surveys

- They had 4 surveyors that rotated during the time (worked between 10 am - 7 pm)
- They had trouble stopping recreational users to survey them

## 2. Telephone survey

- Recreational users of the park are, more than likely, local San Diegans
- They performed 800 telephone surveys

Some of the results of "How are people using the park?"

- 38% of visitors surveyed at the park in August were Hispanic, there was a decline to 14% in September
- Citizens living in the city visit the park an average of 8 times per year
- Citizens living in the county visit the park an average of 6 times per year
- The majority of the visitors in the park were county residents
- In the August surveying, 20% of tourists surveyed said they came to San Diego to visit the Park. The other surveying showed 15%.
- The Park is highly rated
- Locals rate the park higher than tourists do

Some of the results regarding parking:

- Parking is not horrible
- It is rated very similarly to other urban parks
- 40% of people surveyed said it negatively impacts their decision to visit the Park
- When asking people what is the most important thing to them in regards to the Park; maintaining the open space came in as number one, but central parking came in second

Although this is not an accounting summary, with the information they were able to collect, they can estimate that there are 9.5 Million visits to Balboa Park within a year. This is just a brief summary of the study; the report was 142 pages long.

Peter Harnick introduced the second speaker:

### **Glen Sparrow - Project Manager**

He would like to summarize the study of the infrastructure needs of Balboa Park, which is Appendix II of the study. The idea was to come up with a baseline study. What does it cost to run the park?

It became difficult to come up with a single figure. It is a unique park; it has a total of 85 public & private institutions. Large complex organizations, such as the City of San Diego, don't have simple documents with figures. There is a lot of deferred maintenance, capital improvements, etc. for which there is no total figure to go by. Some of it may be due to the city's major governmental change. There are a lot of revenue sources as well. But these sources are documented separately. So what his group did is they selected a group of 21 projects to use as samples. They described the project, determined its reference, current condition, and cost. Janet Wood helped them a lot in understanding documents, etc. They also sampled some institutions.

Some of the Sample projects (a complete list can be found in Appendix II of the report) were; sewer laterals, irrigation, horticulture, Marston House, Seismic Retrofitting, etc. These were chosen somewhat randomly.

They came up with a figure of \$239M. That figure should not be used as an actual mark. The exact dollar figure to address all the deferred maintenance and capital improvements does not exist. That is a number that will have to be figured out later. The park is not falling apart in front of us but there are things under and behind that we don't see.

### **Richard Little - Keston Institute**

Professor Little would be discussing the Different types of Governance.

Professor Little feels confident that eventually the Federal government will step in to help because Balboa Park is not the only one going through a situation like this. There may be grants available, but waiting could be counterproductive.

Running a City is not for sissies, there are a lot of things that have to be addressed. There is education, health, homes, parks, etc. This city is blessed with a Park and Recreation department that does such a great job with Balboa Park. The Park needs attention soon, but unfortunately sometimes it takes a bridge falling down to get people's attention.

There are a backlog of deferred maintenance and capital improvements. How do we get into a situation to address the problems? How do we focus on taking care of the issues? Organizations can be formed that deal with park related issues. Others are experimenting with models. Balboa Park's advantage is that it can learn from those models that are already created. How can this Park be governed more effectively? There are many governance models to consider. JPA's are formed when several governments come together to be responsible for a specific area. They become an enterprise. The funds they control are dedicated to a particular purpose. There must be some borrowing in order to address the deferred maintenance and capital improvements. There is also public/private cooperation. For example, a private sector can build a parking structure in Balboa Park and they can charge a fee for parking, but Balboa Park generates a revenue stream by leasing the land.

If there are 8 million visits a year to Balboa Park and each one of those visitors gave a penny. That would pay for an \$80 Million bond throughout 30 years. This is just an example of how small but cumulative a stream of revenue could be. Richard encourages the Balboa Park Committee to continue having these discussions. Having the city continue the governance of the park does not guarantee that they will use the money intended for Balboa Park on Balboa Park. He thinks that the right governance model will be found to help Balboa Park live in perpetuity.

David Kinney thanked the speakers.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

David Kinney wanted to thank Pete Ellsworth, Bob Kelly, and the Foundations who have spearheaded this study. They, Toni Atkins, and the Mayor insisted that this be a collaborative process between the committee and the public. He informed everyone that there will be additional themed meetings and public comment is welcome. The Balboa Park Committee is looking for a type of governance that is transparent. He opened the floor for public comment, reminding everyone that they should announce their name, what part of the county they live in, and their affiliation, if any, with any institution or group in the park.

Public Speaker #1 – Ashley Gardner, South Bay– Women's History Museum and Education

Center

*I grew up in Canada. While doing your research, have you come across a successful governance model? I understand that Balboa Park already has existing master plans, have these past master plans been re-visited?*

*Peter Harnick: There are many successful ones, but Forest Park in St. Louis would be a good one to look at. There are many similarities between them and Balboa Park. The Forest Park Forever foundation was created to focus on their park. The private and public sector came to an agreement of the \$86 million they needed to fix Forest Park, they would each pay half.*

*Chairperson Granowitz: The master plan is currently being used. Actually, the master plan has always been used since it was created.*

Public Speaker #2 – Justin Reynoldson – Board of Trustees of the San Diego Youth Symphony and of the Japanese Friendship Garden Board.

*During the surveying, Casa del Prado attendants were not queried. My group has put money into the structure we lease from the city, but we can be evicted at any time. It is important that all special purpose groups be included in the surveying. Will there be another study? When we do have another governance, the special groups should be taken into consideration.*

*John Morey – It's up to the City. It is important that smaller special groups be queried. Some of these individuals may have been surveyed. Not everyone that was surveyed was visiting museums; only 50% of them were visiting the museums.*

Public Speaker #3 – Lee Crawford, Kensington Park

*I came as a skeptic but I will go home much more comfortable. Thank you to Toni Atkins, Vicki Granowitz and the rest of the Committee members for the level of intelligence that has been brought to us. However, what assurance do we have that Balboa Park won't be another Old Town? Since, when dealing with Old Town, the City and the State brought in their level of intelligence to resolve that matter.*

*David K. – None of us want a private, for profit corporation to come in and run the park.*

*Richard Little – We never looked at that model. It is not appropriate for Balboa Park. He would never recommend that for Balboa Park. A Private sector may be brought in under the surveillance of the public.*

*Toni Atkins – We have a series of dialogues that the Balboa Park Committee is going to host for the public. There is no pre-conceived idea, there are models to look at, we have advice, and experts, but whatever we come up with is going to have to be a San Diego solution. Balboa Park is unique. We will go to the Natural Resources Committee of the City Council, which is a public hearing. Donna Frye chairs that committee and I also sit in the committee, I purposely lobbied to be in that committee because I knew that governance of Balboa Park would come up. I appreciate the skepticism.*

Public Speaker #4 - Dean Matthew Peterson – North Park Planning Committee

*Vicki and Toni work tirelessly. This is actually a fairly old city when considering the Spanish Folks that established San Diego. The key finding of the large percentage of Hispanics in the park is not really shocking to San Diegans, we share a border with Mexico just a few minutes away. Regarding Professor Little's comment, on wanting services but not willing to pay for them, we are in a very difficult situation and I invite everyone to pay for things we want. My family and I love coming here, I am willing to pay. Thank you so much for what you are doing.*

Public Speaker #5 - Ramona Salisbury Kills, Downtown

*I sat in the Committee that established the JPA for The San Dieguito River Park. I heard about*

*ten years ago that the Zoo and Wild Animal Park pay a very low lease fee; maybe a fee could be attached to the already existing admission to the zoo that goes to Balboa Park. I would like to know more about revenue sources you've come up with.*

*Richard Little – This is a good idea, although the Zoo may argue that an additional \$.50 will decrease the attendance to the zoo. It's these little things that add up to substantial amounts.*

**Public Speaker #6- Jennifer Ayala – Balboa Park Committee**

*What does Balboa Park's attendance compare to other parks in the country?*

*John Morey – Very few parks have been counted with the level of sophistication that Balboa Park has. But with the information collected it is safe to say that it is one of the top ones in the country.*

**Public Speaker #7 - Rebecca Morales – employee at one of the institutions**

*Is it appropriate to reframe the issues? I find it extremely daunting that our drivers should be issues of deferred maintenance and capital improvements? I see this park as an Educational and Cultural District. I see Park and Recreation as a part of it, but not as the driver. I wonder what it would be like if we take off our hats of being concerned about the failing infrastructure and put on another hat of "What could we be?" Some people say that could be the Smithsonian of the West. How do we get there and how do we address the failing infrastructure along the way?*

*Richard Little– You are already kind of the Smithsonian of the West. You are just not branded as such.*

**Public Speaker #8 - Alex Saks – Uptown Planners**

*I am a very Regular user of the park. We do have a lot of plans on the shelf that are waiting for action. Plans for parking structures, but we need money. Professor Little, I am intrigued with a JPA. If 45% of park visitors are from out of the City, then we are a regional asset and we should be funded by the region. Could a JPA be structured to have the park remain an asset of the city but have the support of it be region-wide?*

*Richard Little- I didn't speak of it during my presentation but there are also special districts. If everyone is getting a benefit, everyone should pay. All JPA's and Special districts can be customized to the party's needs.*

**Public Speaker #9 - Bob Swanson - Executive Director of the San Diego Automotive Museum**

*I've enjoyed working with the Park and Recreation Department. I am seriously concerned that this whole process can be a really frustrating experience. There are very few people that realize that this park is in danger. This park was a fabulous place to spend some of my childhood. Despite the efforts and the truly dedicated work from the City, this park is in danger. Aside from the infrastructure, there are other things. Some buildings have to be rebuilt, homeless campsites are being set, people are trying to break into museum after hours, etc. People aren't safe in this park anymore. These things must be addressed.*

**Public Speaker #10 - Sally Weiss, neighbor of the Park**

*I use the park at least three times a week. I have two comments for you. First, the park is SD's only signature piece. Since the city has managed to give the Harbor to Doug Manchester and the Navy Broadway Complex, the park just needs to be maintained the way it is. Secondly, as a member of the SD Sculptors Guild in Spanish Village, I have heard rumors that the City is considering tearing down Spanish Village, the Carousel, and the Little Train to build a parking structure. I really hope that it is a false rumor. There aren't many areas for artists to go to show their work. Art is a very significant part of our culture*

David Kinney: *One of the plans being talked about is a Park Promenade Plan and it is about an underground structure near Spanish Village. That is a very important part of Balboa Park and it will not be torn down.*

Public Speaker #11 - Jay Hide

*The idea of studying Forest Park is great. That park had declined to such detriment it is a good opportunity to study their model. Regarding the parking structure, our transit system needs improvement, because if you build a garage, more cars will come and we don't want that in Balboa Park.*

Public Speaker #12 - David Lang - Balboa Park Cultural Partnership

*Thank you to the Balboa Park Committee, Toni Atkins, the Mayor, and the foundations. I am happy to see all the citizens here. In 2015 we will be celebrating 100 years of the first exposition, which launched Balboa Park, as we know it. We are looking for a governance model that could lead to an even greater park. With everyone working together, and a coordinating government, the potential is limitless. It can make Balboa Park an even more important resource.*

Public Speaker #13 - Janet Fairbanks, neighbor of Park

*I am in the park every day. I have worked in the planning profession and held many jobs with the government and I've learned that when things are going swimmingly the government structure isn't all that key, but when things go wrong it becomes extremely important. I hope that when looking for new governance it is one with a structure that works for those that live next to the park. Visitors that don't live next to the park visit and then go home, but we are with the park all the time. Vicki Estrada did an excellent job on the park's plan, yet it's lacking structure and policy direction to the West side of the Park. We are forming a group of Sixth Avenue and Seventh Avenue residents to address issues on that side of the park. If anyone is interested in knowing more, please see me after the meeting.*

David Kinney explained that the Sixth Avenue Advisory Committee is a new group. It is a sub committee of the Balboa Park Committee and they let us know about important issues on the West side of the park.

Public Speaker #14 - Glen McMertry - volunteer with Senior Lounge in Balboa Park

*My reason for being here today is because my group is run by volunteers. I didn't see much in the study where volunteers are going to fit in. Volunteers' time is worth something too. I volunteer every Sunday and my group is still interested in knowing what's going on. My experience is that I've worked with the Gaslamp Planning Committee back in the 80's and planning can be very successful.*

David Kinney - *In this room we all agree that volunteers are the backbone of the park. There are thousands of volunteers in Balboa Park. Whatever governance we come up with will definitely acknowledge volunteers.*

Public Speaker #15 - Ron Resendis, Santee- San Diego Chess Club

*I am in this park at least 150 times a year; I am the President of the San Diego chess club. We have been in the park for many years and to this day we do not show up on maps of the park. I am afraid that a new governance model may preclude us because we are not acknowledged. We spent 10's of thousands of dollars fixing the building we are currently in because there is no money from the city. The farther you are from the Zoo the less acknowledgment you get. Janet, I will definitely come see you after the meeting.*

David Kinney – *We will help you with The Balboa Park Visitors Center, which are the ones that can get you more recognition. Please see Susanne after the meeting.*

Chairperson Granowitz - *We definitely know you are there, along with the bridge club, and we realize that it is a problem.*

Public Speaker #16 - Mary Lyn Salvador, Director of the Museum of man

*I come to the park with my grandchildren as a citizen, but as the Director of the Museum of Man I have experienced first hand what it means to be responsible for an institution that is facing the difficulties of deferred maintenance. The City and State have restored the facade of the California Building. It is a 92-year-old building and we were extremely close to having some serious problems. Thank God that we are able to have this conversation. I thank the committee, the foundations, and the City for getting us off to a good start.*

Public Speaker #17- Hiro Kirano - Architect of the Japanese Friendship Garden during phase 1  
*When the Japanese Garden was first established there were a lot of plants that were expensive to maintain, I have noticed that it has changed since the first phase. The Japanese Friendship Garden is a cultural gathering place and it should remain as such. I bring my Japanese friends to it when they visit. I think more funding needs to come into it to maintain the Japanese culture for Japanese visitors as well as San Diegans.*

Public Speaker #18 - Se Perin

*What is the general master plan, what has been done and what remains to be done? And how is Golden Gate Park's funding different from ours?*

Vicki - *We had some consultants some years back help us work on the master plan. It used to be posted in the City's website and maybe it should be posted again. Regarding funding for the parks, I haven't done any research on the differences between the two parks.*

Peter Harnick – *I happen to know a little about Golden Gate Park's funding. The City of San Francisco pays for it; they do have a conservancy type organization that raises money for capital needs. But it is not as major as other conservancies we've seen. It doesn't have any specific role with the park aside from helping the City raise funds for the park. My organization has a web page that lists a lot of statistical information, some of it relates to funding. We don't have it by park, but we do have it by city.*

Public Speaker # 19 - Julie Peters Hyde, neighbor of the park

*I was formerly a member of the Balboa Park Committee. I am very passionate about the park. The report was very well done and I am also here as a skeptic. I was very involved with the promenade plan and all of the activities that went with it. \$965 thousand was put into it and it ended up completely driven by the zoo. One of my concerns with this new governance is that the park be really protected. There is very little open space for joggers and walkers. The Park and Recreation team is wonderful, but they are part of the city. With new governance we should have a group as qualified and dedicated as what we currently have. Is there any information that you may have regarding these issues?*

Peter Harnick - *Every park that has moved away from the old fashioned "city does everything." It begins as a fund raising entity and then evolves into a management. Governances can be molded to provide the right management.*

Public Speaker #20 - John McNabe

*I am also somewhat of a skeptic because we know how San Diego operates. Downtown is all a re-development area. Development bonds are being paid for with general funds. Balboa Park is*

*the only place that no one is saying anything bad about. Public Private partnerships have not worked in the past because the public gets thrown to the back. We're seeing that a new organizational structure will be put in a place that no one has anything bad to say about. Is this a way to politicize the park or to allow special interests to come in? Or is the public going to stay number one? Are we looking to create a Czar's position? These are some of the questions that I would like answers to before we destroy one of the only things that still works in the city.*

Public Speaker #21 - Ross Porter, Downtown - Spreckles Organ Society Board

*What I got from the study is that there was some sort of disorganization in governance. There is plenty of good governance in Balboa Park although it may be folkloric. The governance needs to earn trust, so that people are willing to pay. I agree with an earlier speaker, we need cultural identity. People are willing to pay. We ask for donations for our concerts and we've estimated that we get about \$1 to \$1.50 per attendant.*

Richard Little: *Maybe the public needs to be made aware of the need to pay for things they receive. Some people are under the misconception that the government pays for everything.*

Public Speaker #22 - Mary Clark

*I want to thank the three foundations and all of you that are involved with this study. It is an important piece of my life since coming to San Diego in 1946. I used to ride my bike to the park. The museum of art was a thin layer of plaster on chicken wire that was falling apart, gradually all of that was fixed. What you are doing now is a necessity. The involvement of so many of the cultural institutions here, have made my life and the lives of so many so much richer.*

Public Speaker #23 - Debra Klochko

*I agree completely with Mary on the importance of the study and the importance of the park. I have lived on the east side and now I live on the West side. I am close enough to walk and enjoy the beauty of the park, but in working here I get to see all the decay. I have seen the inability of the City to take care of the buildings. Anyone knows that if you take care of something it'll last much longer. Regarding the concern from a previous public speaker about destroying the one thing that works, well, it doesn't work. The system that is in place now doesn't really work and that's why it is important that a system that works be put in place. From both an inside and outside view it really needs to be paid attention to.*

Public Speaker #24 - Mick Hager, Balboa Park Committee, San Diego Natural History Museum, Balboa Park Cultural Partnership

*There seems to be a lot of concern about Public Private Partnerships, but we are already involved in a huge one in Balboa Park. In the last ten years the cultural institutions have committed \$200 million to capital improvements in Balboa Park. My museum built its original facility and later we built an addition to the building and donated them to the city. We also maintain the facility completely. We have a "residents free" day, we have collections that are held in trust, and we participate in the education of our children. These are all public private partnerships; we are simply talking about a refinement of that.*

Vicki – *I wanted to add to Mick Hager's comment, in Balboa Park every single one of these institutions is a non-profit. In Old Town, most of the businesses are for profit, there is a different sensibility. I don't think that many of them are making a huge profit. They do what they do because they are committed.*

Public Speaker #25 -

*I feel very strongly about this park. I am a retired clinical nurse specialist. I hear an under*

*current of "people don't understand, people don't know, people aren't aware of what needs to be done and how it needs to be done". This is an opportunity to educate people. You will be surprised as to how many people will be at your door wanting to help. When people are informed correctly they will come.*

**Public Speaker #26 - Sue Young- City Beautiful**

*Many of you do not know what City Beautiful is but to give you an example of what we've done, we sponsored the statue of Kate Sessions. I wanted to make mention of something that has not been examined. Balboa Park is a world-class arboretum, there has been a lot of discussion of infrastructure, but the park itself is a real piece of work. In the City's records, I have heard that Balboa Park's value is of \$1. We need to find a way to do a cost study for the replacement of the landscape in the park. Let's try to put a value on the landscaping aside from the buildings. They are equally important. If anything were to happen to these trees and plants we'd be hard put to replace them.*

*Glenn Sparrow - That was one of the samples that we dealt with in the report, there are no cost figures for these species. You are absolutely right, it hasn't been done and it should be done.*

*Vicki - Laurie Burgett and I put together our version of what we need to know and in that we put that we don't know how much it would cost to replace the trees and plants. We have a pretty good inventory of trees but we have no idea what it would cost to replace them.*

**Public Speaker #27 - Betty Peabody - Friends of Balboa Park**

*That touches on a study that the Friends of Balboa Park, the foundation, and some of our private donors have paid for. We are approaching it from a little different angle by studying the health benefits of the canopy of trees. I would like for Peter Harnick to address that.*

*Peter Harnick – That is a separate study to determine the value that San Diego gets out of entire Balboa Park System. It won't be possible to segregate Balboa Park from the entire system. It won't count the horticulture the way you are stating. This is more about the benefits on the human and environmental services side of it, rather than a specific horticultural value.*

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

David Kinney thanked everyone for being here today. He reminded everyone that this is not the only opportunity for public comment. The meeting adjourned at 12 pm.

*-Notes submitted by Vanessa Nieves*